

“FELLOW OF POMS” AWARD

When Aleda Roth became President of POMS over two years ago, she asked me to put together a proposal for the *Fellow of POMS* Award. To evaluate the opportunities and possibilities required contacting people from other societies that had experience with fellowship programs.

There are many of them reflecting an incredible number of different approaches. Once the pros and cons had been sorted out, tentative recommendations were discussed with various members of our society who were familiar with the history and culture of our POMS organization.

It is clear that adoption of fellowship recognition is essential to put POMS on the same level with other scientific and professional societies. All major, professional societies have used fellowship to solidify their base of support. The foundation of great societies is composed of people. Articles and books are written by researchers. Students are inspired by their teachers. Problems are solved by P/OM executives who apply their art and science to do it better the first time. Our cases demonstrate conclusively that people are the crucial, scarce resource. Successful professional societies must recognize the contribution of their members in a proper way.

For appropriate fellowship recognition, there are two main options. First, some societies consider the title of Fellow to be a membership category. (You lose it when you leave.) Second, Fellow designation is presented as an award. It is given to recipients for life. The title is (solely) an honor that does not bestow any special status nor does it provide expanded privileges.

The first category of fellowship has caused problems in various societies that have employed it. For example, ORSA, at its inception, limited positions on the Board to Fellows of the society. Non-fellows felt disenfranchised which led ORSA to discontinue the fellowship member level. In the Fall of 2002, INFORMS (created by merger of ORSA and TIMS) reestablished fellowship award status, but this time it was based on the second option.

A strong infrastructure is crucial for the well-being of professional societies. To achieve full commitment to publications, meetings, and service to the society, recognition of significant contributions is essential. This supports high personal involvement and continued retention, as well as attracting new contributors who respond positively to the environment of appreciation for contributions.

The fact that fellowship programs are considered to act in this way became evident as data revealed that fourteen out of fourteen societies studied (major organizations from every field of science) had active and on-going fellowship programs.

Following the POMS-Cancun Meeting (April 30 – May 3, 2004) POMS President Gabriel Bitran set in motion the establishment of a committee to examine appropriate conditions for awarding members the honorary plaque designating them as a Fellow of POMS. This Committee was asked to propose criteria and suggest candidates for recognition at the 2005 POMS-Chicago Meeting to be held in May. The Committee is composed of the Past Presidents of POMS who by Board agreement were the first recipients of the Fellow of POMS Awards at Cancun.

A consensus emerged in discussions at the POMS-Cancun Meeting. It has been strengthened by conversations with members from many areas of academia and industry since then. There is agreement that the organizational model for POMS is that of a professional society without hierarchy. In accord with that, the fellow's award designation should be based on broad inclusion of the membership of POMS.

Recognition of contributions must cross all geographic boundaries. There should be a growing body of Fellows who meet regularly at all meetings. Selection must not be constrained by industrial affinities,

governmental activities, and academic proclivities. Contribution should be defined to be representative of a spectrum of well-informed opinion from a variety of sound constituencies concerning what constitutes accomplishments of merit.

There are many options to be examined. Societies studied to date show great variation in their standards for the Fellows Award. Some examples: one professional society requires 10 consecutive years of membership; another demands 12 years in the profession; one has a minimum age condition; quite a few limit the total number of fellows as a percent of total membership; almost half impose a limitation on the number of new fellows per year. The limits on numbers tend to be applied by large and well-established societies. Accomplishments that merit consideration for the Fellow of POMS Award must be carefully defined.

Type I errors (bypassing someone worthy of the award) are undesirable, but they can be remedied. Type II errors (an award is made that is not justified) cannot be remedied. Type II errors are visible and disheartening for those who previously received the award. They demoralize those who strive to earn the fellows award. The POMS Award Committee will make every effort to minimize both of these two types of errors. The Committee will be particularly cautious about Type II since Type I can be fixed. Every effort will be made to listen and to be responsive.

A few statistics about the supply of candidates for possible awards will help to explain why a Fellowships Award program is well-timed. POMS was founded 15 years ago (June 30, 1989). There have been on average twenty members of the POMS Board serving two-year terms during that time. This means that about 150 people have served the society in an administrative capacity. During the same period there have been about fifty issues of the POM Journal -- including special issues. This works out to about 350 articles contributed by as many as 1000 authors with hundreds of editors who have refereed accepted papers as well as rejected papers.

An important source of potential candidates for the Fellow of POMS Award is in industries around the world. POM executives have been solving vital production and operations problems for decades. A similar statement can be written about the teachers who have contributed teaching innovations to the POM profession. Only recently have candidates come forward to describe their work in response to the Wick Skinner award for innovations in teaching. The time has come to recognize industry practitioners and teachers whose contributions earn them the right to be considered for the honor of receiving the Fellow of POMS Award.

Scores of POMS members have created and chaired meetings all over the world. There have been some outstanding contributions which involved years of work out of the limelight. Intellectual leaders in the POM field have won awards for research ideas and results which may be overlooked without a properly orchestrated Fellow of POMS Award program. It is fitting that we have this Fellow Award program in place for the 15th anniversary of POMS.

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